

Why Booktalk?

Librarians booktalk because booktalking:

- Increases circulation.
- Promotes your collection efficiently.
- Reaches more people in one program than you may see in a whole week (especially teens).
- Is an activity whose primary audience is the nonuser.
- Is the most effective way to motivate reading.
- Increases the audience's awareness of the library.
- Builds relationships with people.
- Provides effective outreach to community groups.

What is a Booktalk?

A booktalk is a trailer designed to get someone to read a book. It is a way of "selling" your merchandise, a performance to get the audience excited about your book.

Tips for Writing Booktalks

- ❑ Choose only books you like, ones that you are enthusiastic about.
- ❑ Be sure to read all the books you are booktalking.
- ❑ When reading the book, look for exciting or humorous incidents, special character portrayals, mood or atmosphere—some "hook" for readers.
- ❑ After reading the book, ask yourself what the book made you think of: stories in the news; concerns in people's lives? What appealed to you about this book?
- ❑ Don't give away the ending or any other secrets.
- ❑ Don't give a book review - it should not include evaluations or critical material.
- ❑ Read the book jacket or the blurb on the back, to see what the publicists thought was significant or attention grabbing.
- ❑ It's okay to check out reviews, too, both print and online.
- ❑ Think of different ways to begin: with a question; setting the scene; focusing on a character; telling a little about the plot; or setting the mood.
- ❑ Don't tell too much about the book. You want to pull readers in, but not drag them through the whole book. Leave the listener wanting more.
- ❑ Read aloud a passage if you want, but only if it is short and *really* worth reading. Don't read from most books you booktalk.

- ❑ Keep booktalks the length of a movie trailer - 2 to 4 minutes.
- ❑ Prepare what you are going to say about each book. You don't need to memorize, but you *do* need to know the points you are going to make. Practice until you are comfortable with your material.
- ❑ There are as many ways to booktalk as there are book talkers. Find your own style, your own way.

Tips for Planning and Presenting Booktalk Programs

1. Know your audience. Ask the group's teacher/leader about your audience's reading interests, personal interests, and attention spans, and plan your presentation accordingly.
2. Think accessibility. Select books for your talk that are available in multiple copies. Check with the school library or other libraries in your area. Once you have a list selected, inform these libraries so they can be prepared. Consider also taking some similar titles, such as other books by the same author. You may want to create a display in the library so that the audience finds the booktalking selection when they visit.
3. For public librarians visiting a school, talk with the teacher or group leader in advance to explain what you'll be doing and that you need this person to stay with the group and pay attention to the presentation.
4. Always prepare more than you will need.
5. Don't try to "elevate" their tastes. Include some titles that you know are super popular (e.g. Captain Underpants for young kids; The Hunger Games for young adults). This will give you credibility, thus making the group more likely to pay attention.
6. Start strong and end strong. You may find it best to begin with a known author.
7. Accept that a booktalk program is a performance and learn how best to influence the audience.
8. Variety is *key*. Since you may be covering over 15 books in one shot, vary the types of books you present as well as the lengths and styles of the booktalks. If you present a "dark" title, follow it up with a light or funny one. Be sure to include nonfiction as well as fiction. Some people like to use themes, but if you do that, make sure it is very broad (e.g. "survival" and then use wilderness, growing up, dysfunctional families, etc. or "food", and have that be the entrée into a number of stories).

9. Introduce yourself and warm up the crowd with a personal anecdote or joke, show enthusiasm, keep good eye contact, invite interaction, and alter your presentation as needed to keep everyone responsive. Involve the audience as often as possible.
10. Remember to repeat the title. Your audience will forget the name of the book unless you repeat it and hand out a booklist or bookmark.
11. Remember why you're there. Don't just sell books, sell reading and sell the library too. Talk about new resources, upcoming programs, etc.
12. Have a system ready so listeners can check out books on the spot.
13. Keep records of the books used and make notes about what worked and what didn't.

A Few Resources

Websites

Booktalking <http://blog.schoollibraryjournal.com/teacozy/2011/02/25/booktalking/>
Blog post on preparing for a day of booktalks at a school by Liz Burns. Her blog is *A Chair, a Fireplace & a Tea Cozy*.

Booktalking Colorado <http://booktalkingcolorado.ppld.org/> Great collection of cardinal rules, booktalks for classics of a few years ago, and convivial posts. Site created by the Pikes Peak Library District, CO.

Booktalking Tips <http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/tips.htm> from New Hampshire librarian Nancy Keane's website, these tips are provided by LM-NET participants. Handing out a list, whether to lend books in the class, how to use short books, etc. Good resource from experts in the field. Keane also has a daily booktalk podcast at <http://booktalker.blogspot.com/>

Books (Available through ILL from VT Department of Libraries)

Baxter, Kathleen A. *Gotcha Covered!: More Nonfiction Booktalks to Get Kids Excited about Reading*. Libraries Unlimited, 2005.

Bibliographies and booktalks sorted by category—adventures, disasters, explorers, freaky and gross chapters. Baxter writes *Nonfiction Booktalker* for School Library Journal.

Bromann, Jennifer. *More Booktalking That Works*. Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2005. Better for teens but includes materials for younger grades and preparing for change. 200 booktalks with index by genre and theme. Lots of topics, e.g., self-help, internet and computers, transsexuals, football.

Diamant-Cohen, Betsy. *Booktalking Bonanza: Ten Ready-To-Use Multimedia Sessions for the Busy Librarian*. ALA, 2009.

Websites and online videos to pair with booktalks. E.g., immigration suggests origami, music, activities and books sorted by age group. Ten topics: lightning, immigration, wishes, lies, dreams, body parts (missing, extra, strange), art, mummies, names, cats and dogs.

Sullivan, Michael. *Serving Boys through Readers' Advisory*. ALA, 2010.

Lists of great titles, advice on booktalking for boys, with some booktalks on older books (2008).



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